THE IDEAL MUSLIM HUSBAND

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Much ink has., been spilled, and much breath spent in defining the role of Muslim women, the rights of Muslim women the duties of Muslim women, and what constitutes an ideal Muslim wife. Maybe because there has been so much misunderstanding of the role of women, we seem to give it special emphasis in lectures and books. However since men and women are inter-dependant it is not wise to concentrate on one and remain silent about the other.

The last time I was invited to speak about "The Ideal Muslim Wife", I made a promise that my next assignment would be to prepare a lecture on "The Ideal Muslim Husband". Many men seem to feel that womenfolk., and their wives in particular, should be ideal Muslims, while they themselves and their fellow men behave as they like without reference to the Qur' an and Sunnah, and unchallenged by the Shari'ah

This paper is therefore intended to redress the balance, to turn the spotlight on to the men, so that they may be aware of the Islamic standard for an ideal husband, and try to reach that standard as much as they wish their wives to reach the standard of an ideal Muslim wife.

The obvious place to look for these standards of behaviour is in the Qur'an and Hadith.

Let us therefore start at the beginning. How does the ideal husband behave before marriage? After all a man does not totally change his character with effect from his wedding day. The bride is joining her life with that of another person whose personality and habits have been in some degree already formed. What then should be the behaviour towards women of a young man before marriage?

Islam does not accept the view common in western secular society that before marriage a young man is expected to "sow his wild oats" - whether by frequenting prostitutes or by sleeping around, or having any form of "trial marriage". For all such activities the Qur' an has prescribed a legal punishment of 100 lashes. (Qur'an 24:2). The Qur'an moreover says:

> *"and as for those who are unable to marry, let them live in continence until Allah grants them sufficiency out of His bounty.,.* " (Qur'an 24:33)

To assist young man in this situation the Prophet in a Hadith recorded in Bukhari further advised:

> *"Young men, those of you who can support a wife should marry, for it keeps you from looking at women and preserves your chastity; but those who cannot should fast, for it is a means of cooling passion, "*

For those who have the means to get married, how should they go about it? We have mentioned that the modem western practice of having girl friends and trial marriages is emphatically unlawful for Muslims. Instead it is expected that the family and its friends will play a big role in finding suitable partners for both their sons and daughters. This process of finding out in detail about the character and circumstances of the proposed partners before allowing the feelings of the boy and girl to be aroused has several advantages. Its effect is to cut out a lot of the embarrassment and temptation and heartache which are common in the western system of courtship and intimate relations before marriage.

The boy is expected to share with his parents certain priorities in the type of girl he hopes to marry, and this is mentioned in a Hadith related by Abu Huraira in which the Prophet advised:-

> *'A woman* may *be sought for her wealth, her birth, her beauty or her religious character. But do look for the religious woman. And if you do it for any other consideration ,your hands be rubbed in dirt.* "(Bukbari and Muslim)

In other words, the key to success in marriage is seen as the moral quality of the partner. The ideal Muslim bridegroom therefore goes into marriage with the responsible attitude of a person establishing a family on the best possible foundation of love and mutual compassion, and not of infatuation over beauty, ambition for wealth or social position. The Qur'an has described the marriage relationship in these terms;-

> *'Among His signs is the fact that He has created spouses from among yourselves, so that you may find tranquility with them; and He has put love and mercy between you. In that are sign for people who reflect"* (Qur'an 30:21)

And again:

> *"They (wives) are garmentts for you. while you are garments for them"* (Qur'an 2: 187)

Having sought his bride in an honourable way, and married her in the manner prescribed by the Prophet - that is with public celebration but the minimum of fuss and ostentation - what are the Muslim husband's duties?

His first duty is maintenance and protection, and overall responsibility for the welfare of his wife, which is prescribed in the Qur'an:

> *"Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which Allah has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions ... "* (Qur'an 4:34)

This includes feeding, clothing and shelter for the wife and for any children of the marriage. This is a legally enforceable duty which remains even after divorce until tl1e expiry of the *iddah* or even longer in the view of some scholars. Financial responsibility for the family therefore rests squarely on the husband, and the wife has no duty to contribute to family expenses unless she has the means and the wish to do so.

The legal obligations of a husband do not stop with provision of the basic requirements of maintenance and protection. He is also excepected to give her company and marital relations, and to avoid doing anything that would harm her.

These obligations are enforced by the Shari'ah. If a man fails to maintain his wife or fails to visit her for more than a certain period of time, the wife has grounds to be granted a divorce by a Shari'ah court. Similarly, if she can prove to the court that the husband is doing her harm (idrar), be it by drinking alcohol, or beating her without lawful cause, or abusing her or her parents and so on, she is entitled to be granted a divorce. In none of these cases can the husband claim back any part of the dowry or presents he has given to the wife.

The husband is however urged in the Qur'an to avoid divorce and try to preserve marriage even if it is not ideal. This is to be done in the first instance by exercising patience with his wife's faults, The Qur'an says:

> *"Live with them on a footing of kindness and equity, lf you take a dislike to them, it may be that you dislike a thing while Allah brings about it a great deal of good",*
> (Qur'an 4:19)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also emphasised the undesirability of divorce in a Hadith found in Abu Dau'd's collection:

> *"The most hateful of all lawful things, in the sight of Allah, is divorce. "*

The ideal husband should therefore, if need arises, make full use of Qur'anic provisions for reconciliation and arbitration, (Qur'an 4:34) before proceeding with divorce. It is to be noted that the Prophet - the ideal husband - never divorced any of his wives.

If a man does divorce his wife, he should follow the steps approved in the Qur'an and Sunnah of giving a revocable divorce, of the type that allows for cooling off and reconciliation before it becomes final on the third pronouncement The divorce is not to be pronounced while the wife is in menstruation, but when she has finished menstruation and not yet resumed marital relations with husband (Qur'an 65: I).In other words divorce is not to be pronounced in anger or at random, but at a specific time when the husband is in control of his reason, and the wife herself is not in the state of emotional upset that sometime accompanies menstruation.

The husband is to continue good treatment of the wife even if divorce is in the end decided upon. He is to keep and feed her a before in his own house until the expiry her iddah (waiting period) without harassment, (Qur'an 65:1; 65:61) and to make provision for her according to his means.

He is not to take back any of the gifts he may have given be before or during the marriage:

> *"The parties should either hold together on equitable terms or separate with kindness. It is not lawful for you (men) to take back any of your gifts from your wives. "*(Qur'an 2:229)

On the contrary, the husband is to give her a gift or some form of maintenance to sustain her after divorce (Qur'an 2:241) Moreover he is not to interfere if after divorce she wishes to marry someone else:

> " .. , *And when you divorce women and they have reached the end of their waiting term, hinder them not from marrying other men if they have agreed with each other in a fair manner."* (Qur'an 2:232)

The husband should also know that according to the Shari'ah he is not the one to have custody of his children after divorce, contrary to the common practice. It is the wife who is given priority in custody of children, in accordance with a Hadith related by Amru b. Shu'aib in Ibn Majah, which tells how a woman came to the Prophet and said:

"Truly my belly served as a container for my son here, amd my breast served as a skin bag for him (to drink out of), and my bosom served as a refuge for him; and now his father has divorced me, and he (also) desires to take him away from me." The Prophet said: *"You have a better right to have him as long as you do no marry again."*

In the Maliki School of Islamic Jurisprudence, this rule is systematised to give priority in custody of children to the mother and to 5 other relatives, preferably on the mother's side of the family, before the custody could be claimed by the father. This custody lasts until puberty for a son and until marriage for a daughter, while the financial responsibility for their maintenance remains with their father.

The knowledge of the necessity of separation from his children must certainly act as a check on indiscrimmate divorce on the part of the husband.

It IS also to be born in mind that the husband is required to be faithful in marriage as much as the wife is. The punishment for adultery of a married person, male or female, under the Shari'ah is death. The fact that the punishment may happen not to be applied in this world at a particular time or place does not make the sin any less grievous in the sight of Allah. A sin that is not expiated in this world is after all going to follow a person to the grave.

Therefore the husband should not fail to follow Allah's command in Qur'an:

"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity: verily this will be most conducive to their purity - (and) verily Allah is aware of all that they do." (Qur'an 24:30)

Those men who cruise around in their cars looking for school girls to pick up are surely disgracing themselves, and forfeiting all rights to require chastity of their wives.

If for some serious reason the husband cannot manage with his first wife but does not want to divorce her, he is not prohibited from contracting another marriage, provided it is done in a legal and honourable way.

The permission to marry more than one wife at a time is however conditional:

" *... If you fear that you cannot do justice between them, then marry only one."* (Qur'an 4:3)

This condition is often taken very lightly in this country where polygamy has long been a social custom. No words in the Qur'an, however, are without meaning, and this verse should not be taken lightly. A weak husband will not be respected and will not act fairly between his wives, whereby his marrying more than one is likely to lead to injustice, constant disharmony and the break-up of his family, which is not in his interests or theirs or in the interests of the Muslim Ummah.

If having married more than one, however, a husband finds his heart inclining to one at the expense of the other, he is warned that this inclination should not reach the stage of neglect of the needs of the other wife.

"And you will not he able to treat your wives with equal justice however much you may desire it. But do not incline towards one to the exclusion of the other, leaving her as it were in suspense." (Qur'an 4: 129)

This warning against injustice is strongly reinforced by the Hadith in which Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet said:

"Whoever has two wives and does not treat them equally, shall come on the Day of Resurrection with half his body hanging down." (Transmitted by Abu Da'ud, Nasa'i and IbnMajah.)

We have so far examined the legal framework of marriage and divorce as outlined mainly in the Qur'an.

This now needs to be filled in with illustration and elaboration drawn from the Sunnah, since the Qur'an tells us:

"You have in the Apostle of Allah a beautiful pattern of conduct for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the final Day." (Qur'an 33:21)

How did the Prophet (peace be upon him) then, behave as a husband'? Obviously he observed the legal framework, but how did he behave in his day-to·-day relationships with his wives?

A lot of information is to be gathered about this from the Hadith, both directly and indirectly, and also from the Sirah (the Biography of the Prophet).

His guiding principle on the treatment of wives is stated in some well known Ahadith such as the following from Bukhari and Muslim:

"From among the believers are those who have the kindest disposition and are kindest to their families - such are those who show the most perfect faith.
The best among them are those who are kindest to their wives."

How did the Prophet himself exemplify this kindness?

Firstly he was not a difficult or remote or tyrannical husband of the type who regard all household chores as "women's work". In a Hadith in Bukhari, Aisha was asked by AI-Aswad b. Yazid what the Prophet used to do in his house. She replied:

"He used to work for his family, that is, serve the family, and when prayer time came, he went out for prayer. " Other Hadith tell us that he used to mend his own clothes.

Secondly he didn't make a fuss about food. It is recorded in a Hadith from Abu Huraira in the collection of Muslim:

"Allah's Messenger never found fault with food If he liked something, he ate it, and if he disliked it, he just

abstained from it" - implying that he never complained about the food or its cooking.

Aisha reported that whenever she was sick the Prophet would come to her to show his sympathy.

Nor was he ashamed to let it be known that his love for his wife was greater than his love for any other human being.

It is recorded in the Hadith collections of Bukhari and Muslim that someone asked the Prophet: "Who among all people is most beloved by you?" And he said "Aisha".

This love and understanding for Aisha did not eclipse his high regard for his first wife Khadijah, who had been his only wife for about 25 years until her death. Aisha reported that he always treasured the memory of Khadijah who had supported and encouraged him through the difficult years in Mecca, and that he used regularly to make gifts to Khadijah's close friends as an expression of his undiminished esteem and love for her.

He never held himself aloof from his wives as if they were by their nature as women inferior. On the contrary, he included "playing games with one's wife" as one of the legitimate entertainments. According to a Hadith in Abu Da'ud, Ibn Majah and Baihaqi:

': .. *There is no amusement which is praiseworthy except three, namely training a horse, sporting with one's wife and shooting arrows with a bow. ..*

In illustration of this practice, Aisha records that on more than one occasion she and the Prophet ran races and sometimes she won and sometimes he won,

Most men of nowadays consider it far beneath their dignity to play any sort of game with their wives, and their marriages are the duller and poorer for it.

I think this is one of the problems we encounter in the way we learn about the life of the Prophet. Most of the history books dwell on the political and military aspects of the Prophet's life, and his

personality, which was obviously very attractive, eludes us. We tend for this reason to picture him as always serious, while the Hadith informs us that although he rarely laughed aloud, "nobody used to smile as much as he did". This is fully in accordance with the Hadith:

"Smiling at your brother (Muslim) is charity'"

The Prophet's attitude towards female children and female education is a beautiful elaboration of what is found in the Qur'an. The Qur'an not only forbade the Jahiliyyah practice of female infanticide, but even condemned the common practice of showing disappointment or anger over the birth of a female child. (Qur'an 16:58-59).

A Hadith related by Ibn Abbas in fact encourages the reverse:

"Whoever has a female child and does not bury her alive, nor hide her in contempt, nor prefers his male child over her, Allah will make him enter Paradise." (Abu Da'ud)

The Prophet showed the greatest love and affection for his female children, particularly for Fatima. Aisha related that: *"Whenever the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw Fatima he would welcome her, and rising from his seat would kiss her, and then taking her by the hand would seat her in his own seat*." (Bukhari).

He decreed that every Muslim - male and female - must as a duty seek knowledge, and prescribed education for all children in the following words:

"No present or gift of a parent, out of all the gifts and presents to a child, is superior to a good broad (general) education." (Tirmidhi and Baihaqi.)

He laid special emphasis on the education of daughters:

"Whoever brings up two sisters or two daughters, and gives them a broad education, and treats them well, and gives them in marriage, for him Paradise." (Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi).

This concern for the education of girls was reflected in his teaching of Aisha, who was still a young girl when he married her and was only 18 when he died. She had a natural ability for learning and a strong sense of reasoning and he taught her as much as she was ready to learn. He was so impressed and pleased with her learning that he even told people:

"You can learn half your religion from this rosy-cheeked girl."

He therefore encouraged people to consult her on religious matters. and after his death she became one of the major sources of Hadith.

From all this we can see that some people's resistance to allowing their daughters to have access to knowledge is not only misguided but quite contrary to all the Prophet preached and practised. An ideal Muslim husband is therefore expected to be deeply committed to and involved in the education of all his children -the daughters as much as the sons.

The Prophet's respect for a wife's intelligence and understanding was also reflected in his readiness to consult his wives and to respond to their good advice. An instance of this practice is recorded on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. Many of the Muslims were reluctant to accept the Treaty. They did not want to go home without performing pilgrimage and they considered some parts of the Treaty disadvantageous to the Muslims. They were therefore reluctant to obey his instructions to slaughter their sacrificial Camels and shave their heads, which would symbolise that the pilgrimage was over and the matter closed. The Prophet withdrew to his tent in perplexity and told his wife Umm Salamah what had happened. She advised him: *'Go out and speak to no man until you have performed your sacrifice.* '"The Prophet followed her advice, and slaughtered the camel calling: *"Bismillah Allahu Akbar"* in a loud voice, whereupon

the Muslims forgot their reluctance and raced to make their own sacrifices.

The presence of Umm Salamah on this journey exemplifies another aspect of the Prophet's dealings with his wives. One or more of them almost invariably accompanied him on his journeys and campaigns. To ensure fairness they would draw lots as to which wife or wives would accompany him.

His wives were thus not kept locked up so that they couldn't experience what was going on in the outside world. They wore their modest dress (hijab) and went out and saw everything that was going on, and themselves participated when necessary, for example in nursing the wounded on the battlefields.

Umar once criticised the Prophet's wife Saudah for going out, saying he had recognised her in the street. So she appealed to the Prophet for support and he supported her saying: "Women have the right to go out for their needs." (Narrated by Aisha in Bukhari)

Similarly the Prophet allowed his wives and other women to go out to the mosques for their prayers. He also advised *other men: "Do not prevent the female servants of Allah from going to the houses of Allah (i.e. mosques)," (Muslim).*

The ideal Muslim husband therefore does not impose restrictions on his wife greater than those imposed by Allah, or by the Prophet on his own family.

All the foregoing indicate that the woman who is married to an ideal Muslim husband is protected but not suppressed, and is therefore likely to be very happy and contented.

However, the Muslim husband is not expected to please his wife at all cost, if what pleases her may be wrong or against her interests or the interests of the family. The Qur'an says:

> *"0 you who have attained to faith! ward of from yourselves and your families that fire. (of the hereafter) whose fuel is human beings and stones."(Qur'an 66:6)*

In this respect a husband has a duty to ensure that his wife is fully educated as a Muslim. If this has been neglected in her parents' home he must take necessary steps to remedy it, either by teaching her himself or by arranging for her Islamic education by other means. The husband is expected to give leadership in the family. We have seen that this form of leadership is not dictatorship or tyranny, The wise husband will, as indicated, consult his wife on important matters concerning the family, and if he sees her advice is good, accept it. However, Islam has given the man authority as the head of the family and he is expected to abide by the Qur'an and Sunnah and endeavour to ensure that he and his family do not violate Islamic norms of behaviour.

The kind treatment required towards a wife should not therefore include condoning her misbehaviour. The Qur'an has prescribed specific graded series of three steps which the husband should take if the wife shows by her behaviour that she is rebelling against Islamic norms of conduct.

His first step should be to speak to her seriously about the implication and likely consequences of what she is doing. If she fails to respond to this sincere admonition, his next step is to suspend marital relations with her for a period of time. If this step also fails he is permitted to beat her lightly as a final act of correction. If she then complies the husband should take no further action against her (Qur'an 4:34).

'This beating is the last resort, and not the first one; and the Prophet (peace be upon him) placed some limitations on it, as follow

(a) It should not be on the face or on any of the easily injured part of' the body;

(b) It should not be hard enough to cause pain or injury or leave a mark. The Prophet indicated that if a man must beat his wife it should be *more* or less symbolic, with something like a toothbrush.

The Prophet himself very much disliked the beating of wives, and never beat any of his own. In Abu Da'ud's collection of Hadith he is reported by Laqit b. $abrah to have said:

"Admonish your wife, and if there be any good in her she will receive it; and beat not your wife like a slave. "

In another Hadith from Ayas b. Abdullah, he specifically said:

"Do not beat Allah's female servants (i.e. women)" (Abu Da'ud, Ibn Majah).

In Trimidhi's collection is another Hadith related by Amru b. al-Ahwas:

"And enjoin on one another goodness towards women; verily they are married to you: you have no power over them at all unless they come in for a flagrantly filthy action; but if they are devoted to you, then seek no way against them. And verily, you have rights over your women and your women have rights over you"

The Muslim husband therefore has no right to beat his wife discriminately or habitually for petty offences, and if he does so the wife has a right to seek divorce by a Shari'ah court. Similarly, as we can see, Islam has not authorised men to beat up their wives in the way we sometimes find them doing, so that the poor wife comes out injured looking as if they had done ten rounds in a boxing-ring.

The phenomenon of wife-beating is not peculiar to Muslims - it is und in all parts of the world among certain types of men. However, some Muslims unjustly claim that they have religious sanction when they beat their wives, while in most cases they are beating them only because they themselves are drunk, or brutal by nature, or just in a bad temper.

Bad temper is to be controlled, not vented on the weaker sex. The Prophet referred to this in another Hadith when he said:

He is not strong who throws people down, but he is strong among us who controls himself when angry." (Abu Huraira in Bukhari and Muslim).

Aisha observed this self control in the Prophet's behaviour:

The Prophet (pbuh), never beat any of his wives or servants; in fact he did not strike anything with his hand except in the cause of Allah, or when the prohibitions of Allah were violated, and he retaliated on behalf of Allah. "

The Ideal Muslim husband therefore strives to emulate the Prophet's practice by avoiding beating completely and discouraging it in others. It is not at all becoming for a Muslim to be a wife-beater in defiance of the Prophet's explicit dislike of the practice.

This brings us to another interesting aspect of the Prophet's relationship with his wives.

He apparently allowed his wives to do what is called "answering back" by men who think that women like children, should be seen but not heard. There are several recorded instances of the Prophet's companions remonstrating with him or with his wives about this practice. Nevertheless he chose to allow his wives to speak their minds.

An incident related in Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah (an early biography of the Prophet) makes interesting reading:

One day Umar rebuked his wife for something and she sharply answered him back: and when he expostulated with her she replied that the wives of the Prophet were in the habit of answering him back so why should she not do the same. "And there is one of them", she added, meaning their daughter (Hafsah), "who speaks her mind unabashed from morning till night': Greatly troubled by

Re-told in "Muhammad - his Life based on the Earliest Sources" by Martin Lings (Islamic Trust Society, George Allen & Unwin 1983)

this. Umar went to Hafsah, who did not deny that what her mother said was true. "You have neither the grace of Aisha nor the beauty of Zainab," he said, hoping to shake her self-confidence; and when these words seemed to have no effect, he added: "Are you so sure, that if you anger the Prophet, Allah will not destroy you in His anger?" Then he went to his cousin Umm Salamah (another wife of the Prophet) and said: "Is it true that you speak your minds to Allah's Messenger and answer him without respect" "By all that is wonderful," said Umm Salamah, 'Whatt call have you to come between Allah's Messenger and his wives? Yes, by God, we speak to him our minds, and if he allows us to do so that his is affair, and if he forbids us he will find us more obedient to him than we are to you. Umar then realised he had gone too far and withdrew.

In this anecdote we can clearly hear the voices of women who respect their husband not because they are afraid of him or out of hypocricy, but out of genuine admiration and love. The fact that he allowed them to speak their minds shows that the Prophet never regarded women as slaves or second class citizens but as human being to whom Allah has given reason and the ability to distinguish right from wrong as He has given them to men.

Aisha went further in a Hadith to say that when the Prophet told her something she would question him closely about it so that she could understand its justification before she would be satisfied. The Prophet did not tell her she had no right to cross question him because he was a Prophet and a man, while she was only a young woman. It appears on the contrary that he appreciated her ciritcal faculty and clear thinking.

From this we can see the Prophet had such calm inner certainty and natural leadership qualities that he did not need to assert himself over his wives, or be on the defensive against them, Those men who behave like tyrants in the home, who assert their rule in an arbitrary or violent manner, are usually the weak ones who actually suffer from

hidden inferiority cornplexs and are afraid of being shown up as mentally or morally inferior to their wives. To forestall this they physically frighten or threaten their wives. Who are then afraid to open their mouths in their husband's presence, let alone to disagree with him.

Another incident illustrates how the Prophet asserted his leadership of his family without harsh words or violence. This is revealed in the way he treated his wives when they became too demanding of the comforts of this world. Aisha related that before the capture of the oasis of Khaybar she had not known what it was to eat her fill of dates. The Prophet's wives, fully aware of the general poverty of the Muslims in Medina, asked only for their most basic needs, After the capture of Khaybar with its rich agricultural produce, the Muslims were better off, and the Prophet was able to give his wives some presents, and they were not slow in learning to ask for more comforts. This led to problems because in fairness, what was given to one should be given to all, and considerable resentment among some of his wives which disrupted the peace of the household. When his advice to them was not heeded he followed the next Qur'anic step and withdrew himself from them all and stayed in a roofed verandah that was the only room he had apart from his wives' apartments.

Rumour soon spread that the Prophet had divorced his wives, and the wives, in suspense, regretted bitterly their demands on him. He then let it be known though Umar that he had not divorced them but that he did not wish to see any of them until a full lunar month had elapsed.

At the end of the month he asked his wives one by one to make their own choice in accordance with newly-revealed verses of the Qur'an:

> *"O Prophet! Say to your wives: if you desire but the life of this world and its charms, then come and I will bestow its*

goods upon you, and I will release you with a fair release. But if you desire Allah and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, then verily Allah has laid in store for you a mighty reward, for such of you as do good" (Qur'an 33:l8-29).

Aisha replied without hesitation: *"Verily, I desire Allah. and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter"* and there was not one of his wives who did not choose the same. These events are related in a number of Hadith books, including Bukhari and Muslim.'

Here we see a husband who in spite of his love and sympathy for his wives, would not be carried away to commit injustice between them, not put himself into difficulties or wrong-doing in order to satisfy their desires beyond what was necessary. He was not ready for the role of the "hen-pecked husband." His firmness in the matter quickly made his wives see it in its proper perspective, and peace was restored to the household without recourse to divorce or even a harsh word.

It is incidents like these that make it quite clear why the Prophet (p.b.u.h) is held up as a beautiful example to Muslims in every aspect of his life.

There are of course numerous other facets of his personality and behaviour which contributed to making him an ideal husband.

He was of course clean and pure both in his thoughts and person, and very generous in accordance with his own saying:

"V*erily, Allah is pure and loves the pure, is clean and loves the clean, is beneficient and loves the beneficient, is generous and loves the generous."* (Tirmidhi)

Another very important characteristic was his love of children. Love of her own children is almost automatic to a mother and with that love goes a care and concern for their welfare that lasts till her dying day. Some men do not share this love for their children in anything like the same degree, and consider the children to be

Fro •• -'Muhammad - his Life based on the Earliest Source.- by Martin Lings (Islamic Trust Society, George Allen & Unwin 1983)

"Women's affair". In our own society today this is a common phenomenon where it is the mother who often plays a major role in ensuring that the children are clothed and cared for, that their school fees are paid, that they learn good behaviour and so on. While it is good that the mother shows this love and concern, it is not approved for the father to abandon his own moral and financial responsibilities and ignore the proper education and upbringing of his children.

We have mentioned the Prophet's own role in the upbringing of his own daughters (it was only the daughters that survived to maturity) and his emphasis on education for both sexes. There are also numerous Hadith indicating his love for children and his practice of showing his love for them, For example in a Hadith from Abu Huraira it is related as follows:

"The Prophet of Allah kissed his grandson Hassan the son of Ali in the presence of Aqra' b. Habis, whereupon Aqra' said: "Verily, I have children, and yet I have never kissed any of them" The Prophet looked towards him and said: "What can I do for you if Allah has taken away mercy from your heart? He that shows no mercy shall have no mercy shown to him. "(Bukhari and Muslim).

The Muslim family is therefore ideally a very united family. Mutual understanding between husband and wife lies at the root of it. The Islamic upbringing of the children is one of its most important functions. For it to succeed as the basic unit of the Muslim Ummah both husband and wife need to know their duties and to practice self control in trying to abide by the Islamic code of conduct within the family.

I wish to draw this paper to a close by approaching the subject briefly from a different angle. We have so far looked at the duties of the Muslim husband as spelled out in the Qur'an and seen how these points were expanded and added to in the Sunnah. We have also taken recorded incidents in the life of the Prophet as an illustration of an ideal Muslim husband in action.

Lastly I approached the question "What is an ideal Muslin husband" by asking Muslim women to tell me what they thought. To

this end a questionnaire was passed to a random group of 35 educated Muslim women married ones, asking them to identity what they considered to be the most important qualities in a husband.

The five most important Qualities scored 2 points each and the five next most important qualities scored 1 point each.

The result is shown below.

Women's Order of Priority in the Desirable Qualities of an Ideal Muslim Husband

	Points
A Pious Muslim	49
Truthfulness and Honesty	47
A good leader	40
Justice and fairness	38
Love of children	37
Kindness and consideration	31
Readiness to consult his wife	30
Good Manners	29
Chastity and good morals	26
Trustworthiness and reliability	25
Avoids quarrelling and beating	22
Clean habits	20
Strength of mind and will	19
Gentleness	17
Generosity	
A loving nature	16
Ability to be contented with one wife	15
Sense of humour	13
Reasonableness	11
Firmness	9
Intelligence	8
Seriousness	7
Good looks	6

Point's

24th Physical strength 4

25th Wealth

This list of qualities is not of course exhaustive, and are a few important omissions. However, it raises many interesting points for our brothers to consider in their endeavour to qualify as a potential ideal Muslim husband.

Those who feared that by adhering to Islamic piety and moral standards they would frighten women away, will see that they are actually at the top of the league.

This information also confirms the natural order of things referred to and upheld in the Qur'an, in that women do apparently want men folk to lead and not be led. Leadership takes a high position at Number 3. But that leadership has to be deserved and qualified by all the other qualities mentioned in the upper part of the list such as piety truthfulness, fairness, kindness, consultation, good manners, good morals and so on.

It is interesting to go over in one's mind the qualities of the Prophet mentioned in the earlier part of this paper and match them with this list to see how far the Prophet's behaviour to his wives demonstrates perfectly those qualities to which women give priority. Therefore any man who wants to make a success of his marriage cannot go wrong if he takes as his model and example the practice of the blessed Prophet.

For our brothers I pray for Allah to give them the faith and moral strength to attain those great qualities and thereby make a success of their marriages. For our sisters I pray for Allah's guidance to make each one of us worthy of being the wife of an ideal Muslim husband.

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